

Message Text

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SUBJECT: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS SPREAD THROUGHOUT VENEZUELA

REF: CARACAS 1927

SUMMARY. STUDENT UNREST SPARKED BY THE DEATHS OF THREE YOUTHS IN SAN FELIPE AND CARACAS SPREAD FEBRUARY 18 TO A NUMBER OF OTHER CITIES AND IS STILL CONTINUING. IN CARACAS RENEWED CLASHES BETWEEN STUDENTS AND POLICE RESULTED IN 21 INJURED. THE GOV HAS CALLED ON ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO USE PRUDENCE IN CONTROLLING THE DISTURBANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. ATTEMPTS TO RESTORE CALM IN CARACAS FAILED FEBRUARY 18 WHEN RENEWED CLASHES BETWEEN NATIONAL GUARD AND POLICE UNITS ON THE ONE HAND AND UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS ON THE OTHER RESULTED, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, IN THE INJURY OF 1 GUARDSMAN, 14 POLICE, AND 6 STUDENTS. THE MOST SERIOUS CLASHES OCCURRED NEAR THE ENTRANCES TO CENTRAL UNIVERSITY WHERE TEAR GAS CANISTERS WERE USED AGAINST ROCK-THROWING STUDENTS. DURING THE NIGHT DEMONSTRATORS BURNED AT LEAST ONE CITY BUS AND ONE CAR IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE CITY. FOLLOWING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S DECISION FEBRUARY 18 TO CLOSE ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CARACAS AND IN SEVERAL OTHER CITIES, THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

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ALSO ORDERED THE SUSPENSION OF CLASES FOR THE REST OF THE

WEEK.

2. PRESIDENT PEREZ AND THE CABINET CONSIDERED THE SITUATION FEBRUARY 18. INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES TO EXERCISE "EXTREME PRUDENCE" IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH STUDENTS AND "IN NO CASE TO USE FIREARMS." THE GOV HAS APPOINTED A SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR AND THE CONGRESS A COMMITTEE TO INVESTIAGE THE DISORDERS IN SAN FELIPE OVER THE WEEKEND WHICH RESULTED IN TWO STUDENT DEATHS. AD PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL LUIS PINERUA STATED THAT IT WAS "INEXCUSABLE" FOR THE POLICE TO HAVE FIRED ON ROCK-WIELDING YOUTHS IN CARACAS FEBRUARY 17 WHEN ONE STUDENT WAS KILLED.

3. STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS SPREAD TO A NUMBER OF OTHER VENEZUELAN CITIES FEBRUARY 18. CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE AND SECONDARY STUDENTS IN MARACAIBO LEFT 12 POLICE INJURED. OTHER STUDENT DISTURBANCES TOOK PLACE IN VALENCIA, MARACAY, BARQUISIMETO, MERIDA, SAN CRISTOBAL, AND PUERTO CABELLO RESULTING FOR THE MOST PART IN BROKEN SHOP WINDOWS AND THE OCCASIONAL BURNED-OUT VEHICLE. SIGNS AND CHANTS PROTESTED THE DEATHS OF THE THREE STUDENTS AND THE VISIT OF SECRETARY KISSINGER. IN SAN FELIPE CALM WAS RESTORED FOLLOWING THREE DAYS OF VIOLENCE.

4. ON FEBRUARY 19 DISTURBANCES CONTINUED AT THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY IN CARACAS.

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THE CURRENT WAVE OF STUDENT UNREST SPRANG FROM THE TWO STUDENT DEATHS IN SAN FELIPE, AND THAT ANTI-AMERICAN AGITATORS HAVE TRIED (WITHOUT TOO MUCH SUCCESS) TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM TO PROTEST THE SECRTRY'S VISIT HERE. AN AD YOUTH LEADER TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE PCV YOUTH WERE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MAKING THE DEMONSTRATIONS APPEAR ANTI-KISSINGER. MOREOVER, THE ONLY MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCIL WHO DISAGREED WITH THE COUNCIL'S DECISION TO CALL OFF A STUDENT MARCH THROUGH THE CITY ON FEBRUARY 18 WERE THE MARXIST MIR REPRESENTATIVES.

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